

Special Edition

Developing a Winning Sales Program Part 8

Last week, I discussed the importance of utilizing existing customers as a way to prospect for additional sales. I indicated that I'm amazed at how sales people will sell a customer anything, and then move on to the next prospects failing to recognize that their last customer is their best prospect.

I also discussed that a sales person needs to analyze themselves;

- If they're not selling, they're obviously doing something wrong;
- Blaming the financial conditions of the marketplace does not get that sales person where they need to be – and that is to generate sales.

I hope the sales people are reading this.

I discussed the importance of avoiding a selling pattern. When a sales person utilizes a particular approach, they play the numbers game. However, when they have one selling pattern, that sales person is only able to sell to those people who buy the way they sell. All those people who might need your service, but are not buying from you, are normally uncomfortable with the way that you sell; therefore, you're not achieving the sale.

As a sales person, it is a very painful process to recognize that you're failing in your profession. However, if you're not achieving your goals and objectives, there is a fundamental problem with the sales process.

In my earlier articles, I indicated that a successful sales person;

- Must have objectives.
- Doesn't make excuses.
- Ask for orders.
- Raises and meets objections.
- Does their homework.
- Manages their time and territory.
- Has product knowledge.
- Listens to their customers needs.
- Talks to decision makers.
- Sets high goals.
- Follows up.
- Gives concessions only for a return.
- Controls situations.

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- They never close the door on opportunities, and;
- Believe in their service and their company

What I have noted when training my sales people; they are not properly prepared;

- They don't set specific goals and objectives.
- They don't set time frames to achieve the goals and objectives, and;
- They don't do their homework;
- They don't listen to what the customer needs.
- To be quite frank, they sit around and don't make enough telephone calls or appointments.

Operational and product knowledge is so important in order for a sales person to succeed.

In reference to establishing sales goals; on average, in order to confirm one appointment with a potential customer, you must call 15 prospects. To achieve one appointment with an existing customer, you must make 10 telephone calls. **Therefore, under normal guidelines, a sales person's minimum weekly sales calls should consist of:**

1. New customer calls – 50 minimum.
2. Existing customer calls – 30.
3. New customer appointments – 7.
4. Existing customer appointments – 8.

In other words, the sales person, along with management, must determine minimum goals and objectives for that sales person to achieve. The other thing that I've noticed is that some of my sales people do not use the telephone effectively. They are not effective listeners. **Asking and looking are the easy parts; listening is the hard and most important part. The "hot button" is the answer.**

In order to obtain a "hot button" response from a perspective customer, you need to be able to develop questions that will help you understand that Buyer's situation better;

- **Ask questions** of importance and significance.
- **Ask questions** about the area you think is hot.
- **Ask questions in a subtle way and work them into your presentation as part of the conversation and watch the reaction. If you believe it's a "hot button", offer solutions that satisfy that circumstance.**
- **Don't be afraid** to bring up the "hot button" throughout the conversation.
- **Confirm and reconfirm** and listen for an emphasis of response from the prospect, and;
- **Offer a solution and ask the prospect to commit to buying if you provide a solution.** This type of question or statement gets a true response because it consists of a possible solution that hits the issues.

I've also suggested including humor in the presentation, but you have to be careful on how it's utilized. Nothing builds rapport faster than humor. It's a bonding mechanism that transcends and reveals all prejudices and pre-judgments. It brings process to a human level. It brings out the truth and the best way to find the truth is through humor.

If a sales person listens carefully to a prospects joke, it will also reveal philosophy, prejudice and intelligence or lack thereof. In reference to utilizing humor, you have to use it in a way that's not offensive, but sets the tone for the meeting;

- Don't make jokes at someone else's expense.
- Use yourself as an example or be the victim of a joke.
- What this shows is that you're human and you can take it.

It is also a safe form of humor. I remember one time I was trying to “land” a large private equity customer. This person was a hard sell, very rigid, never cracked a smile, and it was very frustrating for me to deal with this type of individual because I knew that;

- I could fulfill his specific needs.
- I knew his firm needed my services in order to penetrate a specific market space, but;
- I couldn't get the prospect to open up – so I used myself as an example.

I alluded to a trip I took to the ATA convention, some time ago, in which I was in an airplane. I explained that I had a black shirt on, a black pair of pants with a silver buckle and I thought I really looked “hot”. I went to the bathroom, and when I came out, everybody was looking at me and I thought to myself; “boy, I am really something”! **All these people were looking at me, I really felt good. However, I failed to recognize that as I left the bathroom and had tucked my pants in, there was toilet paper stuck to my pants** and as I was walking down the aisle way, the toilet paper was dragging behind me. In other words, I was the “butt” of the joke. **That was a humiliating experience but it made that individual open up; he started laughing and we became partners.**

I always try to stay away from ethnic jokes, and that's a rule. I don't even make any ethnic jokes in my office, it is not proper. How your humor develops really determines whether you're going to make that sale or open up that prospect to listening to you. My point; you need to differentiate yourself from everybody else that's calling on that prospect. To this day, I still have differentiated myself to that customer because he has this thought process (in his mind) of me walking down the aisle with toilet paper hanging out of my pants. **Every time he thinks about it, he laughs.**

I think the point I'm making is that I was able to humanize a situation and the relationship, and once I accomplished that, that differentiated me from everybody else that was calling on him. In the end, I got a sale!

In another instance, I remember that I called on a large trucking company and he told me they weren't interested in utilizing my services; he told me that they were happy with the services they had and didn't know why they even scheduled an appointment with me. At that point in time, I said “I want to thank you very much for telling me no, because you're helping me to get one step closer to a yes”! I told him that I appreciated his honesty, frankness, and I also told him that in many instances, it takes me 10 no's to get one yes and then I asked him for a referral. **In fact, I asked him for 5 referrals. This prospect was blown away by my persistence because nobody had ever thanked him for being a jerk.** Most people would have said; “you had me fly all the way out to your terminal and spend thousands of dollars to tell me no – you could have done that on the phone”, but I didn't do that. **That prospect is a customer of mine and has been for many years now.**

In order to be an effective sales person, particularly in a market like this, you need to develop a power statement. A power statement is a statement that makes your service outstanding, understandable, credible, incredible, and the prospect wants to buy it. **It's a non traditional statement that describes not only what you do, but how you do it in terms of the customer** and the perceived use or need for what you're selling.

Early in my sales career, I learned that you need to be creative and if you sell only price, you're not utilizing the proper tools. Successful insurance sales people don't sell insurance. They sell safe and financially secure ways to protect company and individuals;

- **Successful car sales people do not sell cars** – they sell the prestige and status that you'll have, or a smooth ride.
- **Successful printing sales people don't sell printing** – they sell brochures that will reflect the prospects image and impact their sales.
- **Successful eye wear stores do not sell eye glasses** – they sell better vision and a stylish look.

That's what a power statement does. It makes a prospect think about what you do in terms of how he/she can use what you're offering;

- It builds credibility.
- It draws a clear distinction between you and your competitors.
- It makes the prospect want to hear more.
- It gives the customer a reason to buy.

- It breaks down resistance.
- It makes a more favorable impact on the prospect, and;
- Creativity says what you do in terms of the prospects needs.

It's important for a sales person to recognize that their job is to be remembered! That sales person must say, give or do something creative that will stay in the prospects mind in a positive way. **As I stated previously, every time I tell the joke about the toilet paper, my customers laugh.** It's true that I may be "the butt of the joke" **but it also shows that I'm human, I am prone to make mistakes,** but I'm not afraid to admit my mistakes and I'm not afraid to make fun of myself.

To sum up this week's article, an effective sales person needs to;

- Be prepared.
- Focused.
- Relationships must come first.
- Tasks second, and the sale is the result of the basic fundamentals.

A sales person needs to be an effective listener and they need to be able to utilize humor in their presentation. They need to be consistent, persistent, and creative and not only work hard, but work smart. An effective sales person must be willing to learn something new, must make a lot of appointments, and must work frantically at work – **particularly Friday because the last days sets the tone for the next week.**

If you want to close more sales, you have to listen more closely. The biggest problems with listening are that;

- In many instances, you have an opinion (of what you are going to say, before you begin listening), and;
- You've often made up your mind before you begin listening, or before you hear the full story.

The two most important rules of being an effective listener must be:

1. First; listen with the intent to understand.
2. Second; listen with the intent to respond.

It's important for sales people to continually invent and reinvent themselves, particularly based on current market conditions. You can never dwell in the past, but you need to focus on the present and the future.

In closing, it's important to understand why customers buy. Customers buy to:

1. Solve a problem.
2. Because they need it.
3. They believe they need it.
4. They believe they get a competitive edge.
5. They eliminate mistakes.
6. They feel good.
7. Change in a mood.
8. They solidify a relationship.
9. It sounds too good to refuse, or;
10. They believe that they receive a good value for their dollar.

They also believe that you've solved the solution to their problem. There are no Buyer types, there are Buyer characteristics. Individual traits make up a personality. Don't categorize them, but try to understand them. **There is a rule of etiquette when you're working with a Buyer (my sales people) and that is:**

1. Never argue.
2. Never offend.
3. Never think or act like you're defeated.
4. Try to make a friend at all cost.
5. Try to get on the same side of the fence, and;
6. Never tell a lie.

Next week will be the end of my series and I will be focusing on how to take control of a sales situation. How to close more sales; how to effectively make more calls and how to create an effective buying environment.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK: **“Most of us know how to say nothing, few of us know when.”**